

# Better quality affordable housing projects needed

➤ Residents of old projects saddled with issues such as poor maintenance, hygiene and bad neighbours

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**PETALING JAYA:** Affordable homes may be within the financial means of more people, but they are highly inadequate as a conducive living environment. Better quality affordable housing projects are much needed.

Residents currently face a host of problems, from the lack of cleanliness and poor maintenance of facilities to the shortage of living space, and at times even distasteful characters living next door.

According to a resident in a low-cost flat here, 23-year-old Ashvina Maniam, the biggest problems are hygiene and having foreigners as neighbours.

“The corridors as well as the lifts are seldom cleaned and some residents leave their rubbish in the middle of the corridors. The garbage not only leaves a stench but also makes the place unsightly,” she told *theSun*.

Ashvina said the lack of maintenance for the rubbish disposal facility also invites pests such as rats and cockroaches. “The stench from the garbage disposal area cannot be missed even

from miles away.”

The people responsible for the upkeep of the facilities have been slow in taking effective remedial action, she added.

Ashwina said many foreigners or migrant workers have also moved into such flats, and they have a tendency to cause a ruckus at odd hours.

“We do not actually have a shortage of affordable homes. The real issue is the lack of proper maintenance.”

President of the Kota Damansara PPR (people’s housing project) Residents Association Yuslina Yusuf agreed with Ashwina. However, she does not consider space an issue. “At 650sq ft, I think it is adequate for a family of four.”

On the other hand, an April 2020 study by Universiti Putra Malaysia concluded otherwise. The study showed that congestion was a primary contributory factor for mental problems. It revealed that 25% to 32% of all individuals with mental illness are residents of low-cost homes, and it cited depression and anxiety as the main causes.

Yuslina said space only becomes a problem when two or three generations of the same

family are forced to share the same space.

“A flat of 650sq ft to 700sq ft is not big enough for three generations of the same household,” she said.

In response to complaints of the lack of cleanliness, Yuslina said the problem can be easily resolved if the management company introduces stringent rules and acts accordingly when problems arise.

She said the long wait for an affordable home, especially for people in Selangor, is another issue that must be addressed. “Many people have been on the waiting list for a PPR flat for up to four years.”

She urged the government to step up and meet its responsibility to provide sufficient affordable homes without any delay.

Social problems are also endemic in these communities. The World Bank, in a 2019 report titled “Breaking Barriers: Towards Better Economic Opportunities for Women in Malaysia”, revealed that for people struggling to generate enough income to meet basic needs, affordable housing becomes the only option.

But herein lies the problem.

“The PPR provides residents with basic services but, to some degree, also separates them from the outside world, raising the risk of the emergence of a cycle of deprivation for children who have to live in an area characterised by poverty and at times violence.”